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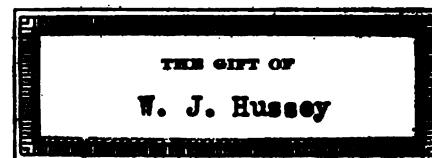
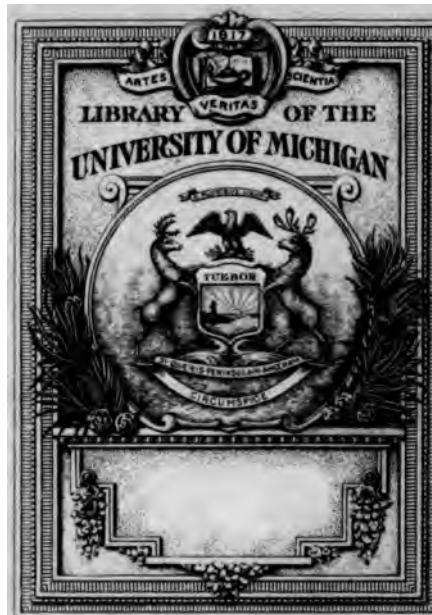
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A REPORT
on the
OASIS OF SIVA.







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REPORT
ON
THE OASIS OF SIVA
BY
T. B. HOHLER.

“Through mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palms. . . .
A land where all things always seem’d the same.”



CAIRO, DECEMBER, 1900.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following is a description of the Oasis of Siva and its inhabitants as seen on the occasion of a journey made in July of this year by Mr. Machell, Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, accompanied by the writer. It is supplemented by such information as could be obtained by careful enquiry, or extracted from the reports of present or past Egyptian Officials who have represented the Government in that district.

To this account, M. Maspéro, Director-General of the Egyptian Archaeological Department, has added a most valuable and interesting note on the ancient history of the oasis, and a further note on the origin of the series of water cisterns which exist along the Marmaric Coast.





SIVA.









AGHOURMI.





REPORT ON THE OASIS OF SIVA.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION OF THE OASIS AND ITS INHABITANTS.

LEAVING Cairo on the morning of Sunday, June 17th, 1900, the diary of the journey was as follows:— [Itinerary](#).

- June 17th. Left Alexandria by steamer 3.30 p.m.
- June 18th. Reached Mersa Matrouh at mid-day.
- June 19th. Left Mersa Matrouh at 7.40 a.m., with Bimbashi von Dumreicher, and an escort of seven non-commissioned officers and men of the Coast-guards; in all 42 camels.
- June 24th. Reached Siva 9.45 a.m.
- June 26th. Left Siva 4 p.m. making direct for Sulloum.
- July 1st. Reached Sulloum Bay at 9.50 a.m.
- July 2nd. Left Sulloum at night.
- July 3rd. Visited Bardia—a port on the west.
- July 4th. Reached Alexandria 8 a.m.

The northern coast of Egypt, from Alexandria to Sulloum, slopes gently upward from the sea till it reaches the edge of the great Sahara plateau, at a distance varying from twenty to forty miles inland. Northern littoral of Egypt.

becomes greater. It is inhabited by families of the Aulad Ali tribe of Bedouins, with their flocks. Water is found in sufficient quantities, firstly in wells, and secondly in cisterns.

Wells.

The wells are numerous and contain an unlimited supply of water: in some cases the water is close to the surface; but occasionally the wells are some hundred feet deep, cut through the solid rock and evidently of great antiquity. The water is drawn up in a waterskin attached to a rope which passes over a pulley of primitive construction. The other end of the rope is fastened to a donkey or camel, which is made to walk away from the well until the waterskin reaches the surface.

The wells of Bir Gefirah, near Ras ed Dhabba, and the Zowia well near Sulloum, are of this kind. Any number more might easily be sunk.

Cisterns.

The cisterns* are far more common, and are scattered over the whole country. They are large rectangular underground tanks, cut in the rock, with one or sometimes two square holes to give access to the water. In most cases the roofs have fallen or been broken in—probably by the Bedouins in order that they may have less trouble in watering their flocks.

The supply of water depends on the rainfall, and, in order to husband the store, the Bedouins observe certain rules as to its use: for instance, at Bir Geleizah—a tank about 4 metres deep, 40 metres long, and 12 broad—on the Mersa Matrouh-Siva road, they only allow kids under one year, donkeys and human beings to drink. Each of these cisterns is regarded by a family as its own property, and the advent of strangers is very unwelcome, even if money is offered for the water. The reservoirs are much choked up with earth and sand, brought in by the water during the course of centuries: round them will generally be found ruins and foundations, built of small roughly-squared stones. In most cases the buildings consist of a small tower, and, beside it, what seems to have been a rest house for travellers, or a barrack for a military post.

* See M. Maspéro's observations in Appendix B.

For some distance from the sea, the land is very fertile: the winter rains are sufficient for the cultivation. successful cultivation of barley, and the patches of land so turned to profit by the Bedouins are frequent, but their husbandry is very rude; they merely scrape the surface of the earth with an elementary plough and scatter the seed, leaving the rest to Providence.

The success of the farm which H.H. The Khedive has recently established near Mariout has proved the capabilities of this coast; in 1899 the barley grown on this farm won a prize at the Cairo Agricultural Exhibition; for malting it is said to be unsurpassed and commands a market price, higher by about 8s. per quarter, than any other quality. Grapes* and melons also find a congenial climate and soil.

There is no doubt whatever that this deserted coast, the fabled abode of the Lotus-eaters, possesses remarkable potentialities of agricultural wealth: it remains, however, to be seen whether anyone will have the enterprise to attempt to revive the prosperity of ancient Marmarica with its numerous cities, Taposiris, now Abusir; Parætonium, at Mersa Matrouh; Delphinon (Mersa Omrakum); Leucaspis at Ras el Gabeesa; Zephirium at Ras ed Dhabba; Kalameion near Mersa Barek, besides smaller settlements.

Though there is some kind of anchorage for small ships at almost all these places, the only good harbour ^{Harbours} is Mersa Matrouh (the ancient Parætonium or Ammonia). Here the cliffs suddenly cease, and the line of the coast is carried on for about half-a-mile, by an irregular reef of partly submerged rocks. Towards the western end of this barrier is a narrow entrance with four fathoms of water, giving access to a basin about half-a-mile long by a mile-and-a-half broad. At the eastern end, the water is from five to seven fathoms deep, and well protected from all winds, but between this and the entrance is a shoal with only one-and-a-half or two fathoms. Ships are consequently obliged to anchor near the entrance, where they are insufficiently sheltered from northerly winds. A passage could, without any difficulty, be cleared by dredging, through to the safe recess within.

* Cf. Horace: "Mentemque lyniphata Mareotico," and Virgil: "Sunt Thasiæ vites, sunt et Mareotides albæ."

On the east side of the harbour there is a coast-guard station of recent construction ; a considerable number of Bedouins are settled in the vicinity where fresh water is plentiful. There are two salt lagoons, one at each side of the harbour, from which they are divided by a narrow ridge of sand. Remains of the ancient town are found on the southern and western shores.

Animals.

Animals are very rare in all this district : there are a few gazelle, hares, and cameleons ; also some snakes, and many lizards, while the camel-scrub is in many places white with the shells of innumerable large snails. W. G. Browne, who visited Siva viâ Alexandria and the coast road in 1792, says he came across many traces of ostriches, and old travellers have stated that the lion was found in these parts, but more particularly in Tripoli.

The Sahara.

For two days after leaving Mersa Matrouh, there is at least enough of the gray-green scrub with its parasite snails, to rest the eye from the glare of the sand, though it grows constantly more and more rare. At the end of the second day, the true Sahara is reached, and all trace of vegetation ceases. The desert is of a clayey character with hardly any sand : such rains as fall are quickly dried up by the sun, and the earth is uniformly fissured all over, the space between the fissures being about the size of a man's hand. This again is for the most part covered with a very slight even sprinkling of small rough stones, which in many places are dark brown and give the whole desert a tone of black ; but there are large stretches free from stones, which have a shiny surface, and strongly reflect the rays of the sun : they have a curious resemblance to huge sheets of linoleum.

The extreme flatness of the country is barely relieved by a slight rise, of a terrace formation, in every 20 or 40 miles.

Siva oasis.

After three days' journey, the high desert plateau ends in an abrupt descent, through horizontal layers of sandstone, into the great Libyan depression, and the dull gray of the palms in the distant oasis comes at last in sight.

Short steep wadys lead down into the valley, which it takes camels about an hour's hard work to reach. On the southern side, the valley is shut in by similar hills, though more irregular and broken, about four or five





GENERAL VIEW OF OASIS.





miles distant. To the east it spreads in a winding course between these two uplands, which finally seem to enclose it. The western limit is marked by a gently-rising slope of sand ; to the north-west of the town there is a kind of bay running a considerable distance up into the northern line of hills.

The ground at the foot of the hills is fine sand, with a few scattered palms and Halfa grass. In front the towns of Siva and Aghourmi rise from amidst forests of palms : many small rough hills and undulations break the level of the valley, while its uniformity is diversified by frequent clumps of palms. There are several salt lakes, of which the largest lies immediately to the east of Siva ; another is about two or three hours' distance to the north-west.

The lakes are, in many respects, similar to those at Wady Natroun : in summer they are nearly dry, owing to the increased evaporation, and the land so exposed hardens : the salt* and mud crystallize into slabs, rough and broken in every direction ; the surface becomes like an immense ploughed field frozen hard, or, still more, like the ice in a river when the floating blocks are first crushed together by the current.

Lakes and
Marshes.

This hardened surface is very difficult to cross, but in winter, when the lakes are full, the Sebakheh, as the salt lands are called, become marshes on which it is impossible to travel.

As the Sivans are practically surrounded by them, they take great pains to build and maintain certain causeways across them, some four yards wide, marked out for further safety with palm branches.

The level of the oasis is stated to be approximately 72 feet below the sea. Its geographical position is $29^{\circ} 12'$ latitude north and $25^{\circ} 31'$ longitude east.

The walls of the old town of Siva rise from the plain to a height varying from about 120 feet on Town of Siva.
the east side to 70 or 75 feet on the west.

* Vivien de St. Martin, in his "*Dictionnaire de Géographie*," states that the superior quality of Sivan salt used to be kept for certain special religious ceremonies, and that it was exported as far as Persia, for the use of the Kings.

It is probable that there is a hill or rock in the centre, as there the houses rise highest. The town is flanked on its western side by a little hill called Karret el Belad, in which some ancient tombs have been hewn.

The houses are built one above the other, and eight or nine tiers may be clearly distinguished: the whole forms one solid mass similar to a large ant heap.

The building material consists of the blocks of mingled salt and mud brought from the Sebakheh. The builder works without a line, but gradually adds to his wall, sitting astride on the part he has completed, and thus few walls are straight. Another architectural peculiarity is that, owing to the friable nature of the materials, it is necessary to construct the walls much thicker at the base than above: this is particularly noticeable in the minarets, which resemble stunted factory chimneys. Repairs are frequently required, as the salt mud is very liable to dissolve in rain, and the timbers are all cut from palms, the wood of which is very heavy and cannot be cut into suitable planks: nothing less than half a tree possesses sufficient rigidity to support any considerable weight. Keys and locks are constructed of olive wood: they are similar to the old-fashioned Egyptian "dhabbah."

Holes in the walls serve for windows: usually the holes are round and are arranged in groups of three, two below and one above, in order that the strength of the wall which has so great a superstructure to uphold, may thus be impaired as little as possible.

In previous times, the people of Siva used to live, without exception, inside their fortress-town, through fear of attacks from the desert Arabs, and access was obtained by a single* gate, but, since the erection by the Egyptian Government of the Maamourieh outside the walls, a number of houses have sprung up among the gardens: further, the gate and the adjacent building have recently been destroyed by an earthquake, so that several of the passages which traverse the town, now lead into the open. These passages—they cannot be called streets—burrow through the town in every direction, forming a veritable labyrinth: they meander up and down in complete darkness without any kind of order. Some-

* Browne states that he found four.



TOWN OF SIVA.



N.





GOVERNMENT BUILDING, SIVA.





times a broad and comparatively high gallery will be reached—one such was used in previous times for the meetings of the Sheikhs—but, as a rule, it is necessary to crouch in order to pass along. Occasionally a ruined house has left a gap through which the oasis and the surrounding hills are seen, and relief is obtained for a moment from the close air and offensive smells prevalent in the heart of the buildings. Side passages lead to the various houses, of which only those which are fortunate enough to be on the outside wall, have any light: the ear constantly catches the sound of the grinding of corn, and of voices, but the eye cannot see whence it comes. It is difficult to understand how people can live in such conditions, and among such fetid odours.

From outside, the houses of the elders and the rich can be distinguished, as they are painted white with lime. The new houses built outside the town are much like those in any Egyptian village: the doors are very low, and an occasional window may be seen, in which a piece of packing case serves as a substitute for glass.

Round the foot of the great wall are a number of booths, with roofs of mud, supported by palm trunks; they are used as storehouses or shops, the greater part belonging, apparently, to butchers. The goods are heaped up on dirty mats, and no refuse seems to be without its market value.

On the north side, there are several large squares, carefully enclosed, called Mesatih, in which the inhabitants keep their dates and olives; they are seldom empty, and the soil in them is always red and sodden with the juice of dates.

On the north side again of these enclosures stands the new Government building, square in shape with a courtyard in the centre; it comprises accommodation for the Maamour, the Cadi, the two police officers and the clerk; a prison, a dispensary, a school, a law court and the Mehkemeh Sheri'a. The whole building is whitewashed, and contrasts strongly with the old brown walls behind. It is not particularly healthy, as the salt marsh reaches up to its very threshold, and the walls are saturated with salt percolations. A sanatorium, however, is now being erected on rising ground about three-quarters of a mile away.

There is a post office on the northern slope of the Karret el Belad; there are four letter-carriers by whom the mails are conveyed twice in the month to Mersa Matrouh.

There are certainly two wells in the town, one in the east and the other in the west, with an unlimited supply of good water; some travellers assert the existence of a third.

Aghourmi.

About a mile-and-a-half to the west of Siva, is situated the town of Aghourmi; it is built on a rough precipitous hill, round in shape, formed of level horizontal strata of sandstone: it consequently stands higher above the plain than Siva and presents a more picturesque appearance; but it has the same peculiarities—such as the maze of murky streets, the single entrance, etc.

In the centre of the town are the remains of an Egyptian temple, built of massive blocks of well-fitted masonry. Two great doorways and several walls are still standing, but the houses cluster all over them like swallows' nests on an old barn, and no exact idea can, under the circumstances, be formed of the entire extent of the ruins. We were unable to see any inscriptions or carved figures of divinities.

There is a deep well similar to those in Siva, towards the bottom of which, on the west side, an opening in the rock may be perceived: the Sheikh of Aghourmi stated that a passage led from above to communicate with this opening, which is believed to be in connection with the temple of Jupiter Ammon (called Om Beida), a distance of some 400 or 500 yards further west.

The people of Aghourmi have now, like their neighbours, begun to build houses outside their fortress, among the date trees and gardens.

Temple of
Jupiter
Ammon.

It is regrettable to see how rapidly the dissolution of the ruins of Om Beida* is proceeding: there hardly remains at present the half of that which is described by travellers at the beginning of the century. The great sandstone blocks fall, as age destroys their supports, into a salt marsh, and they crumble quickly into dust under the influence of the salt, leaving no more trace behind them than the bodies of those who set them up. It is useless to add to the numerous descriptions of the temple,

* For an account of the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, see M. Maspéro's note—Appendix A.



1

TOWN OF AGHOURMI.





especially as a German expedition visited the oasis in 1899 with the express object of studying its remains.*

Halfway between Aghourmi and Siva, about three-quarters of a mile to the north of the road, is Catacombs. the famous Gebel el Musaberin, or Gebel Muta, some 170 feet high, with a circumference of rather over half-a-mile. It is honeycombed throughout with graves, which are the haunts of snakes, scorpions and bats, and are still full of fragments of mummies. We saw no paintings nor inscriptions here, and it is evident that the art of embalming was indifferently known. The graves appear to have been thoroughly rifled of whatever may have been of value, though their number is so great that it is possible some still remain untouched.

Other antiquities are found at Karret el Wazidi, about six miles to the north ; at Karret ed Dakroor, to the south-east, and at Karret el Khamissa, some nine miles to the south-west, near which are the ruins of the temple known as Belad er Roum.

The people of the oasis are full of superstitions about these places : they believe that treasures beyond the dream of avarice are buried in them, but that they are guarded by jinns and evil spirits.

Just as Egypt has been called the "gift of the river," so may Siva be described as the gift of its The Springs. springs. They vary considerably in size : their number is approximately 180. The larger wells, such as the famous Fountain of the Sun, are 25 or 35 yards in diameter : the sides for a certain depth are edged with stones. The water, overshadowed by a dense growth of luxuriant palms, is seen rising from the numerous springs some 30 or 40 feet below the surface, sometimes with sudden bursts, and sometimes in a continuous stream of small bubbles which show through the clear depths like strings of pearls. One such basin will be fed by as many as 40 or 50 springs, varying constantly in the amount of water they

* A preliminary account of the work accomplished by this expedition has already been published by Professor Steindorff, entitled "Vorläufiger Bericht über seine im Winter 1899/1900 nach der Oase Siwa und nach Nubien unternommenen Reisen." George Steindorff. Königl. Sächs Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig.

emit. It is easy to imagine how much the beauty of the spectacle is enhanced by the five days' journey from the sea.

Irrigation.

Each spring forms, as a rule, the nucleus of a farm (Hattieh) which it is used to irrigate. No shadoof or sakia is necessary; the edge of the basin is simply built up to the level required, and when the water has reached the brim, it is conducted by runnels, such as are usually made for irrigating the fields in Egypt, to the fields or palms wherever it is required. When the Hattieh is the property not of one but of several persons, the water is distributed according to an ancient code known as the Kanoun el Wagibat, or Defter el Ein. By it, the day is divided into two halves, called Wagbah—the first from sunrise to sunset, and the second from sunset to sunrise; and the Wagbah is again divided into eighths. It may happen that an individual does not require all the water to which he is entitled, and he may then sell his surplus to a neighbour; occasionally also a man possesses a right to the water, but the land has passed into other hands. It is not uncommon to see the water from one spring carried on a little aqueduct over that from another. Disputes are referred to an arbitrator, called a Rakkab, who is appointed by the community, and who is skilled in dividing the time by observing the sun by day and the stars by night.

Springs are usually cleared out once a year.

The water is always possessed of medicinal qualities. The various springs differ considerably in their degree of sweetness, and a sweet and bitter well are often found in close juxtaposition. It is stated that about seven years ago a salt well became sweet in consequence of an earthquake.

Cultivation.

On the level immediately above the Sebakheh are the cultivated lands, on which Siva depends for its existence. The best portion (el Helwa) are called Mazareh; the inferior, barely free from salt, are called el Safra. The ground is divided into small oblong patches, as in Egypt, into which the water successively runs. The implement mainly used in tilling the fields is a gigantic hoe, similar to the Egyptian fas, but much larger; the iron is about the size of a large English spade. Field labour is mostly done by negroes, and in fact the number of Sivans who practise any trade is very small—one druggist and a few carpenters and blacksmiths complete the list.





A SPRING IN THE OASIS.





In the open ground, barley, wheat and clover are principally cultivated. The grain is sown in October or November, and is ripe in March or April ; it is threshed by donkeys in droves of 15 or 20. The clover (*berseem hegazi*) is sown in October, and springs up annually for about five years.

Sugar cane, cotton, beans, maize, tobacco and hasheesh are also cultivated, but not to any great extent. There is no rice. Vegetables are grown, like the crops, in little oblong patches, but only under the shade of the trees. They include bannias, egg-plants, purslane, cucumbers, gherkins, parsley, radishes, mint, water-cress, tomatoes, garlic, onions, melons and red pepper.

The trees which overshadow them are olives, and, more especially, dates. Besides these, the Trees. gardens contain pomegranates, apricots, plums and vines in abundance ; there are many fig trees, some oranges, lemons and apples, and a few roses. The shady gardens are a pleasant resort, but the soil does not seem remarkably fertile ; it either bears plants that are tended and watered, or else it remains barren ; there seems to be hardly any spontaneous growth, with the exception of the wild palms and the rough Halfa grass, called Samar, round the marshes, which is gathered for plaiting into mats.

Quails, Egyptian doves, hoopoes, and many small birds are found, as well as a bird, which has a Birds. very sweet note, called Hag Mawla. The plumage of the bird is black, and it has a white tail.

The flies are an absolute plague ; mosquitoes, fortunately, are less numerous. Snakes, scorpions Insects and animals. and enormous tarantula spiders exist in considerable quantities. There are a few gazelle ; hyenas and numerous jackals are said to live in the more remote parts of the valley.

The domestic animal most used in Siva for all kinds of work is the donkey. Donkeys do not, Domestic animals. however, breed well in the country, and they are, therefore, mostly imported in winter from Upper Egypt viâ the oases ; it is said that the number of them in Siva exceeds 1,000. A few of the richer Sheikhs possess horses. Hens and beladi pigeons are common ; sheep are brought for sale by the Bedouins. A few camels are kept, but only for food ; finally, there are a few head of cattle.

Climate. The air of Siva is oppressive and unpleasant ; this is due in great part, no doubt, to the exhalations from the lakes and salt marshes, and to the low level of the oasis. The wind blows almost invariably from the north, but the full benefit of it is not felt, owing to the height of the northern plateau above the valley. Rain falls rarely, and never heavily. The summer is very hot ; the winter damp and very windy, with cold nights. The climate is unhealthy, especially to strangers, including Egyptians, the prevalent malady being fever, from which the locality is never quite free.

Sivan fever. At the time when the apricots are ripe, *i.e.*, in the month of April, the fever increases temporarily both in extent and in severity, and it is then called the "apricot fever," but during the date season, which begins in August, it assumes a much more virulent form, and is often fatal, especially to strangers. The Egyptian police stationed in the oasis suffer much from it, and the Bedouins are in such fear of it that they can hardly be induced to approach the place at these seasons. The people of Siva use no medicine against the fever, believing that it will only be aggravated thereby, and become deadly. They are reported, none the less, to be on the whole long-lived, and in 1892, the then Cadi cited the case of a man named Sheikh Subhi who was, he said, 120 years of age, and remembered the French invasion of Egypt under Napoleon.

Ophthalmia is common and there is great mortality from small-pox, especially among children. The doctor who is posted in Siva by the Egyptian Government, is regarded with distrust, and has little practice ; the people when ill, prefer to go to the barber and his two sons, who are his assistants. This practitioner possesses surgical instruments invented by himself and made by the local blacksmith ; for sores, etc., it appears that he first uses powdered alum and then applies an ointment made of yellow wax mixed with mutton grease and resin, while for swellings he prescribes a plaster of either bread and vinegar, or pressed dates.

Population. The entire population of Siva is estimated to be between 5,000 and 6,000 souls. It has been divided, from time immemorial, into Sharkeyeen (also called Lifayeen), or Easterns, and Gharbeyeen, or Westerns. It is believed that the people of Aghourmi are descendants of the ancient inhabitants of the oasis ; that the Easterns came later, but at what period is uncertain ; and that the Westerns immigrated at a comparatively recent epoch from Barbary, but no external or facial difference between the three parties can be perceived.



1

SHEIKHS OF SIVA AND AGHOURMI.





The whole people has again been divided, during the last 50 or 60 years, into the religious sects of Senoussi and Madani.

The following table of the male population was drawn up about the year 1888. The numbers are the most accurate that can be procured, but there is no register of births and deaths, and no regular census has ever been taken:—

—	Tribe.	Family.	Number of Senoussi.	Number of Madani.	Representative in Assembly of Sheiks.
THE EAST.					
TOTAL ... 755	ADADSA ... {	El Hamoudat ... Esh Sheramba ... El Gowayis ... El Adneeyat ... El Hamidat ... El Adeerat ... El Makhalf ... El Asakra... ...	40 30 40 40 40 40 55 45	115 50 20 45 80 30 45 40	Mohammed Said. Mohammed Abdullah Kuli. Osman Ismail. Abdel Kader Sami. Abdullah Hamid. Mohammed Bekoor. Abdur Rahman Maaref. Ibrahim Hamdi.
<i>i.e.,</i> SENOUSSI ... 330	ZANAYEEN ... {				
AND MADANI ... 425	HADADEEN ... {				
THE WEST.					
TOTAL ... 415	AULAD MOOSA {	El Kazarat ... El Rowageb ...	185	—	Mohammed Abu. Bekr Rageb.
All Senoussi.	SARAHNAH... ...	—	160	—	Mohammed Mansour.
	EL SAMASSIM ...	—	70	—	Bekr ibn Daoud.
AGHOURMI.	—	El Samayeen ... El Bawna... ... El Kasharna ... El Anadeed ...	40	90	Ahmed Ghiri.
OM ES SOGHEIR.	—	—	—	—	Said Daoud.

TOTAL ABOUT 1,300 MEN—SENOUSSI 785, AND MADANI 515.

A secular enmity exists between the Easterns and Westerns ; bloody conflicts have frequently occurred, at which the women assisted, inciting the combatants by songs, shouts and insults. The people of Aghourmi, however, boast of having kept aloof from these quarrels.

Sheikh Senoussi used his influence in the cause of peace : his followers were directed to abstain from the combat, and the Easterns, thus deprived of half their strength, came to terms with their enemies. The old strife, however, still breaks out at times, as in February 1896, when, after a prolonged and bloody struggle, two of the chief Senoussi Sheikhs came from the neighbouring oasis of Jeghbub and arranged a settlement. It is easy to understand on what trifling grounds strife arose in the days when both parties dwelt confined in their wasp-nest fortress, divided by an invisible frontier ; and it was to avoid more causes for dispute that each of the two sections of the town has within it a separate market, a separate well, a separate storehouse, etc., and to this day no Eastern can live, or purchase property on the Western side, and vice versa.

The judgment universally passed on the character of the Sivans is sadly unfavourable. Although followers of the strictest and most austere sects of Islam, and although fanatical in their religious beliefs, they are stated by Mussulmans to be devoid of true piety and religion. They are charged with hypocrisy, untruthfulness, coarseness of manners, and general corruption : they are lazy and gluttonous, treacherous and suspicious, cowardly and uncleanly ; they are given to intrigue and devoid of strength of character. They are impoverished by their spendthrift habits, and consequently usury, at ruinous rates, prevails widely ; their passions are easily roused to a point of fury ; and the morals of either sex are said to overstep all limits of decency. It is curious in this respect to compare the remarks of Herodotus on the habits of the Nasamonians. Of their good qualities we hear but little.

Many Sivans come to Cairo and other Egyptian towns, where they find occupation as scavengers (zabbal) : they carry the refuse of the houses to the baths, where it is used as fuel.

They are of a strong constitution and tall stature ; in colour they are about as dark as Berberines : their features are by no means prepossessing. Their usual dress is a white gallabieh, with a takieh

surrounded by a small turban on their heads. The poorer men and the negroes wear jibbehs made of coarse material which is manufactured at Kerdasa in the Mudirieh of Ghizeh. The women are closely veiled and jealously secluded. Visits, however, are frequently made between women of the same party, but civilities are rarely exchanged between Easterns and Westerns. It is stated that when a woman pays a visit, whether in summer or winter, she wears all her dresses, which sometimes amount to five or six: on arriving at her friend's residence, she takes off most of them, and on going out resumes them. The object of this is to display her wealth.

The visits which it is customary to pay to a sick person are so prolonged as sensibly to retard his recovery.

The houses are dirty and malodorous; the scanty furniture consists of straw mats—and, in rich houses, rugs—mattresses or cushions stuffed with straw or wool: boxes and baskets skilfully plaited of grass or palm fibre: mud benches against the walls, and pegs for hanging clothes.

For their food, the Sivans use wooden or plaited bowls and trays, the rich having sometimes pots and trays of copper. Rough earthenware is manufactured locally, but there is not such a thing as a plate in all the town.

They eat in the morning and at sunset; it is said that the pleasures of the table, to which they are especially addicted, are a source of great expense to them, as meat is not easily procured. The poor eat cats and dogs—which, consequently, are very scarce in the oasis—as well as rats and jerboas, which, abound, and crows; also the small fish which are caught in the lakes and water-courses. The favourite dishes of the rich are prepared from the flesh of camels and sheep. The Mohammedan feast days, especially Courban Bairam, are the great occasions for gastronomic indulgence, and each family takes pride in exhibiting publicly the number of animals which its wealth has enabled it to slaughter.

They drink water, a fermented juice of the date called Labka, a beverage prepared from grapes, and tea. Coffee, as well as the smoking of tobacco and hasheesh, is forbidden by Sheik Senoussi*; they occasionally chew the latter, and in place of the former they have adopted tea.

* W. G. Browne, in 1792, remarks that the Sivans did not habitually use coffee or tobacco. They were then of the Melikite sect.

Tea-drinking. Tea-drinking has now become an institution. An election is held to decide who shall have the honour of making the tea. The favoured, or skilled, elder thus chosen to be the "Sultan," sits on the ground with a low table before him covered with small cups, and, with curious ceremony, mixes together almost equal quantities of sugar and tea—green tea of a particular kind, and extremely bitter. If, on pouring out, the supply is found to be insufficient to go the round of the assembled guests, he delicately drinks up the last half-filled cup, pours the rest back into the tea-pot, adds more water and begins afresh. Three cups of tea for each guest are "de rigueur"; the third is further flavoured with a quantity of mint. The beverage tastes rather like a decoction of walnuts, and is a curious mixture of sweet and bitter. The Sivans speak highly of its salutary effects. It seems that similar customs as regards tea-drinking obtain in Morocco.

Marriage. Men marry about the age of sixteen; women from nine to twelve. No deed is drawn up, nor, with rare exceptions, is the marriage registered at the Mekhemeh Shari'a, on account of the fees, though it appears that an irregular system of family record exists.

It is the bridegroom who gives the dowry—of a value not exceeding six dollars—to the parents of the bride, as the girls work, and so have an actual value; on divorce, he must pay the dowry a second time, or at least complete the payment of the sum he had originally promised. Polygamy is rare, but divorces are incredibly frequent. For instance, the case is reported of a man who had repudiated over 40 wives.

Among Sivans, as among Bedouins and many other Eastern people, the custom obtains of making a show of resistance at the moment when the bride is taken away from her parents.

Funerals. Funerals are accompanied with the most noisy demonstration of grief, especially on the part of the women. The body is carried in an olive wood bier to a roughly dug grave where it is protected, though not concealed, by one or two slabs of palm wood. It is necessary to take care when passing by a burial place not to fall into one of these pits. There is a cemetery close to the north-west side of the town, and another larger one at some distance to the south. The graves of the East are divided from those of the West.





GHAFFIRS AND SHEIKHS OF SIVA.





One of the Egyptian Cadis in Siva relates that, on the death of a married man, the widow is confined for four months and ten days in a dark room, where she is visited only by the female attendant who provides her with necessaries. At the end of this period she goes by night preceded by a crier, who warns the people from the road before her, to bathe in the spring called Tamous,* near Aghourmi, and in the morning she is again allowed to mix with her fellows. But any one whom she may see previous to this ceremony is regarded as having incurred the dangers of the "Evil Eye" in their most serious form.

Whether this account is true or not, it is certain that the people of Siva are exceedingly superstitious ^{Superstitions.} and especially dread the Evil Eye. Skins, bones, skulls of horses (as may be seen throughout Asia Minor) and other objects are hung on almost every house and over almost every well, to avert its malignant influence.

A person who thinks he has been "overlooked," goes to an experienced Fiki, who inscribes cabalistic signs upon an egg, amid the fumes of incense: charms are muttered while the egg is moved seven times round the head of the sufferer, and then broken in a basin. In it the sorcerer discovers, and shows to the patient, the Evil Eye which afflicted him, and destroys its power by scattering it on the ground.

The people of Siva are greatly feared by the Bedouins on account of the powers of witchcraft and magic which they are believed to possess. Doubts may be entertained as to the efficacy of their spells, but they certainly are accustomed to practise astrology, and have a firm belief in horoscopes, incantations, jinns, talismans, fortune-telling and the like.

The chief diversion in this place is dancing: men only take part in it, and the Easterns and Westerns ^{Sivan dance.} dance separately. The musicians, playing on a couple of drums and two or three pipes—made sometimes from the barrel of a gun—stand in the middle, and produce a strange iterative tune in a minor key,

* Brides also bathe in this spring on the night before their wedding.

while the dancers whirl round them in ever-increasing excitement, singing, in time to the music, a love-song in the Sivan dialect. It is perhaps as well that the words are not intelligible, as it appears that they are by no means of an edifying nature. The dance is similar to some of those seen in the Soudan : it consists of a kind of triple step ending with a sudden pause. Curious by day, the spectacle is still more striking by night, shown up by the light of a few lamps and torches. These people will continue to dance for 24 or 36 hours, refreshing themselves with the date wine, called Labka, after which they will bathe in one of the springs.

Language. Rohlfs, Robecchi-Bricchetti and others have collected a considerable vocabulary of the Sivan language, which has proved to be a dialect of the Berberi : a Tunisian tribe named El Khawamis, is said to use the same tongue, the only difference being in intonation, that of the Sivans being the deeper. Most Sivans now understand and speak Arabic : thirty or forty years ago knowledge of this language was limited to a few, and it appears that, in the last century, the office of interpreter for the whole oasis was the privilege of a single family.

Education. Education is, to say the least, extremely elementary : there are five schools in which religious teaching is imparted ; three belong to the Senoussi sect, one to the Madani, and the fifth is presided over by the Egyptian Cadi. The present Cadi is building a new school, and has inaugurated classes for adults as well as for children : he is a man of energy and intelligence, and his efforts promise good results.

Time. There are no watches or clocks in Siva ; time is measured by the movements of the sun and the stars. The hours for prayer are ascertained by means of a kind of sun-dial fixed on the wall of the mosque.

Measures. The standard for weight measurement is the Sa'a, which is equivalent to 2 okes (1 oke = $2\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.) ; for length measurement, it is the length of the arm of the tallest man in the town, marked off against a palm branch. Other measures are as in Egypt.





SIVAN DANCERS.



6



CHAPTER II.

PAST RELATIONS OF SIVA WITH THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT.

THE relations of Siva with the Egyptian Government date from the time of Mohammed Ali. Previous to his rule, the oasis was governed by the assembly of the Sheikhs, but the enmity between Easterns and Westerns gave the community no peace, and the assembly itself was ruled by whichever faction was at the moment victorious.

Early in 1820, Hussein Bey Shamashery marched, by the Pasha's order, with a force of 1,000 or 1,200 men and some artillery, to Siva, starting from Alexandria and travelling via Hamameh, Lebbak and the oasis of Gara*. After three hours' combat he subdued the Sivans, and imposed a tribute of 1,000 dollars. He was accompanied on this expedition by several Europeans—Linant, Ricci, Drovetti and Frediani, who brought back much information, especially concerning the ancient buildings, as well as maps, plans, etc.

Owing to the non-payment of the tribute, Hussein Bey was again sent to Siva in 1827 with about 800 men. He went by the Oasis route, and, on arrival, found the people ready to submit, but a quarrel rose as to the surrender of certain Sheikhs. After a brief contest, Hussein Bey again occupied the town and decapitated eighteen of the notables ; their families received L.E. 10 each as indemnity, but their property was confiscated.

* A small oasis, about two days' march due west from Siva ; sometimes called Om Es Sugheirah. There is a curious tradition as to its population : it is related that once upon a time a very pious Sheikh, named Jeleel el Kadr, was reviled and abused by the people as he passed through, whereupon he cursed the place, and from that time the number of inhabitants has been always 150, and never more nor less. If a child is born, they believe that some man is destined to die,—and it follows that if a man dies, a child will surely be born. As a matter of fact, the poverty of the spot is probably most concerned in limiting the number of inhabitants.

Twenty more persons were sent in banishment to Egypt, a certain number were taken as hostages, and the tribute was increased to 6,000 dollars: finally, a Kashif, or Governor, was appointed to represent the Government.

In 1833 and 1834, 10,000 dollars was exacted as tribute. In the following year, a Maamour arrived with 40 soldiers, numbered the palms, and assessed them at L.E. 2,400. On his departure, the people revolted, and paid no taxes till 1840, when another force with artillery came by the Oasis road under Khalil Bey, who seized the crops in payment of arrears, and fixed the tribute at L.E. 2,000. He left one Youness Effendi as Maamour with a guard of 50 men, but the latter was shortly recalled and the country was again left to itself and its assembly of Sheikhs.

In 1857 a fresh Maamour, named Ali Effendi, came with forty soldiers to restore order on the occasion of a violent party quarrel over plunder which had been won from some Bedouin marauders. Shortly afterwards a Maamour was permanently appointed to superintend the district, but the force at his disposal was utterly inadequate either to collect taxes or to preserve order. The post was very unpopular, and appointment to the Maamourieh of Siva was regarded both by the Government and its employés as a form of banishment.

In 1883, another expedition was sent bearing letters from the Khedive for Sheikh Senoussi at Jeghbub, and here a characteristic story of Sivan intrigue begins. Fourteen years previously, Omdehs had been appointed for the oasis, but their power was practically nil, and the nomination of Said Abou Derah, a Madani, as Omdeh of the East was not recognized by the people, even when after a visit to Cairo, he returned in the company of this last expedition. However, Sheikh Said enjoyed the title of Omdeh of the Madani, and the possession of a decoration, till his death in 1893. His son Mohammed Said then came to Cairo, and endeavoured to obtain the succession to his father's dignities, but without success. On his return, he published rumours of an expedition against the Senoussi, and Sheikh Senoussi consequently withdrew his negroes, 500 in number, from his lands at Zeitoun, and prepared for his own departure from Jeghbub for Kufrah. It is probable that the residence of Sheikh Madani Zafer at Constantinople, and the intrigues which he there carried on, as well as the vexatious conduct adopted by the Turkish authorities towards the Senoussi sect in Tripoli, and the frequent envoys sent to him by the

Sultan, contributed to form the Sheikh's decision to quit Jeghbub. The fact that Sheikh Madani lives at Constantinople is not, however, wholly to his own advantage; a messenger arrived about this time from Aboul Huda, a well-known figure in the entourage of the Sultan, who was commissioned to obtain signatures to a document expressing discontent, and petitioning against Sheikh Zafer, his principles, and his authority.

At the same time, the old Maamour, who had been in Siva for about fifteen years, died, and Mohammed Said hastened to Cairo, so as to return together with the new official, Hassan Bey Sherif. He succeeded in imbuing the latter with violent hostility against the Senoussi, with the result that strong complaints were soon addressed to Cairo on the subject of his treatment of them. Hassan was recalled, and the new governor, Ibrahim Bey Abdallah, arrived, announcing himself, as well as his superior officer in Behera, as followers of Senoussi. Mohammed Said at once had recourse to the Egyptian Government, and yet another Maamour was sent, who suffered considerably from the loss of prestige incurred by the conduct, and successive recalls, of his predecessors.

Finally, in 1896, a commission started under Mustapha Bey Maher, whose experiences will well exemplify the condition of affairs in Siva. He reached the oasis at the end of September, and found that all the elders of the Senoussi party had gone to Jeghbub, to bid farewell to some of the family of Sheikh Senoussi who were starting to join him at Kufrah. The disorders which commenced in the preceding February between the East and the West, and to which reference has already been made, were not yet at an end despite the intervention of the Sheikhs deputed from Jeghbub; the Sheikhs and notables always went out armed and attended, while firing was constantly taking place. Raids on crops and cattle were of daily occurrence. The administration of justice was at a standstill, as the rabble used to gather at the door of the assembly, and overawe the Sheikhs. Taxes were in arrear to the amount of L. E. 4,970, namely, L. E. 970 for 1894, and L. E. 2,000, being the total sum annually due, for both 1895 and 1896. This deplorable state of affairs was doubtless due in great part to the injudicious conduct and inefficiency of the Maamour.

Mustapha Bey was received with considerable distrust. Neither by his assurances, nor by the smallness of his escort, was he able to impress upon the people the peaceful nature of his mission. His

small force was further considerably weakened by fever. However, on October 3rd, the Sheikhs presented themselves before him, the Senoussi elders having now returned, and promised to pay their arrears on October 10th. They further accepted, after approval had been obtained from Jeghbub, a modified criminal code which Mustapha Bey had drafted.

On the 10th, the Sheikhs appeared with about L. E. 220 ; each had paid a part of this total proportionate to the sum for which he was really liable. They excused themselves from payment in full on the ground that the crops were not yet gathered, that the merchants had not yet arrived, and that the harvest was indifferent. They agreed, however, to deposit the crops, as soon as they were gathered, in the Messatih as a guarantee, under the guard of the police. Meanwhile the Jeghbub Sheikhs wrote exhorting their followers to obey the orders of the Government, while similar letters were addressed by Sheikh Zafer Madani at Constantinople to his adherents.

One of the most turbulent members of the community was a certain Western, named Hassouna Mansour, of the Sarahnah tribe : in 1883, he visited Cairo to complain of the Maamour, but without result ; he returned full of enmity to the Maamour and to his own brother Mohammed, who was the Sheikh of the tribe. He refused to pay the taxes, and in order to be better able to defy the authorities, he built himself a stronghold outside the town. However, the taxes were paid by the Senoussi, and then recovered from him by a threat of excommunication.

This individual now became the nucleus of opposition : he resisted by force an attempt made to arrest him ; firearms were again used, and the whole town was in an uproar. The Sheikh of the Sarahnah supported the Bey, but was powerless to exert any real influence ; he admitted the fact openly, when ordered by the Assembly, according to law, to arrest and bring before them the disobedient members of his tribe ; and some, even, of the men who had been posted to besiege Hassouna supplied him with water and provisions. On the refusal of the latter to surrender under promise of a safeguard, it was decided to seize and sell the produce of his lands : he, however, retaliated by sallying from his stronghold, unmolested by the besiegers, and even assisted by them, and by carrying off some neighbouring crops belonging to his brother, the Sheikh. The situation was rendered more critical by a general belief that Hassouna's action was inspired from Jeghbub. This was not, in reality, the case ; the advice sent by the

Brethen was that no assault should be made lest blood should be spilt, but that moderate measures should be employed.

The Sheikhs of both parties entreated Mustapha Bey to send for one of the Jeghbub Brethren, and upon consideration of the weakness both of his situation and his escort, and of the growing excitement in the town, he did so. Within ten days' time, Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Idris, a near relation by marriage of Sheikh Senoussi, arrived, and Hassouna at once surrendered to him. The Sheikh, while procuring his freedom from Mustapha, reproached him for his conduct, whereupon his followers at once abandoned his cause for that of his brother. The Bey dwells on this as a striking instance of the implicit trust and absolute obedience rendered to the authority of the Senoussi.

Comparative peace was now restored, and the crops were gathered and deposited, as arranged, in the Messatih, where they were guarded by the police, pending the payment of all arrears. The strictness of the watch occasioned further discontent, as the people desired to dispose of their crops for their own purposes. Sheikh Ahmed again entreated Mustapha to moderate his demands, and a public meeting was held to request that the watchmen might be removed. Prolonged discussions ensued, and finally an arrangement was come to, by which the assembly promised to pay L.E. 3,000 in three instalments, the last falling due in March, 1897, while the tribute for 1896 should be allowed to stand over until the following year. The agreement was signed and Sheikh Ahmed returned to Jeghbub on November 15th.

The following night, a theft of some dates was committed on the land of a Western. The thieves were seen by a Ghaffir who brought assistance, with the result that two men were wounded, and some firearms and donkeys were captured. These proved to be the property of Hassouna Mansour and of another of the Western notables; further, one of the thieves, who was mortally wounded, was identified as a negro in the service of Hassouna. Intense enmity was instantly kindled between the East and the West. Mustapha Bey managed to appease, to a certain extent, the Eastern faction, which he found the more tractable of the two, and at once called a meeting of the Sheikhs, with the result that Hassouna came to see him and promised to produce the offenders. When, however, the offenders failed to appear, another meeting was called, at which the Easterns attended, but the Westerns excused themselves from coming, saying that they feared an ambuscade on the part of their enemies. Police

were then stationed at the doors, and the Western Sheikhs entered ; but at this juncture news was brought that some of the Medani of the East had seized two goats belonging to the Westerns, and a scene of the wildest excitement followed. The police, however, managed to prevent the spread of disorder, and to restore the goats to their owners. Meanwhile to avoid capture by order of the assembly of Sheikhs, Hassouna took sanctuary in the Senoussi Zowia. Messengers were sent by all parties to ask the opinion of the Jeghbub confraternity, and, in the interval, East and West formed up into two solid camps. On the fourth day answers came from Jeghbub pointing out the trifling nature of the offence committed, and exhorting all to live in harmony. The wounded Sivan was a Madani, a fact which further imperilled the public peace, but finally matters were settled by the two Western notables swearing fifty oaths before the tomb of the local saint, Sidi Shinan, according to their custom, that they had taken no part in the theft, and that the negroes had acted without their knowledge, and by their paying L.E. 2½ as an indemnity to the wounded man. Hassouna then visited Mustapha and expressed his regret for neglecting to appear with the guilty parties as he had promised, but, he said, fear had made him hesitate. The judicial authorities undertook to overlook the offence, and a final reconciliation was effected. Hassouna Mansour met his fate in April, 1897. A serious quarrel arose between East and West, with the result that 40 of the former including two Sheikhs and 45 or 50 of the latter with five Sheikhs were killed, and 35 and 55 respectively wounded. The Westerns fled, leaving their dead and wounded. An armistice was arranged by Bedouins of the Garara tribe, and after four days brethren from Jeghbub arrived and re-established peace. Shortly before his death Hassouna had been one of the ringleaders in an attack made on Mr. Blunt, an English traveller.

It may be added here that, in 1897, the Egyptian Government decided to remit the taxes for 1896.



GHAFFIRS.



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CHAPTER III.

PRESENT ADMINISTRATION AND TAXATION.

THE foregoing story of Sivan life serves to illustrate the different currents of intrigue, the party divisions, and the intense excitability which prevail in the country.

Mustapha Bey Maher made a number of recommendations with a view to ensuring better administration, and these have mostly been carried into effect, with, so far, very good results.

The power of the Government is very much curtailed by the fact that, although a law court, a <sup>Autono
nature
admini
tion.</sup> Mekhemeh Shari'a, a dispensary, &c., exist, for the most part the people refuse to have anything to do with them. A contract of sale or division of land is executed before witnesses with the help of a native clerk ; like the contracts of marriage before mentioned, it is not registered in the official books, so as to avoid payment of the fees. Divorces, deaths, and successions are unregistered for the same reason. The income of the Mekhemeh is in consequence practically nil ; the little there is, is derived mainly from the estates of Government employés who die in the oasis. A dispute about irrigation is settled by the Rakkab, and a question as to rights in a spring is decided by the Sheikhs in accordance with the Kanoun el Wagibat. The partition of taxation among the various families and individuals is also arranged by the Sheikhs, the Maamour merely keeping a list of the tribes, together with a statement of the lump sum for which each is responsible ; the actual collection of taxes is similarly in their hands.

The above account shows sufficiently to how great an extent Siva is autonomous ; it has been administered for centuries past by the head men of its component tribes, and its people are extremely jealous of interference from outside.

It may easily be understood that the task of the Maamour, supported by his force of some twenty <sup>The Ma
and gov
ment of</sup> police who are weakened by the local fever, is no light one. He must exercise the greatest tact to hold

the balance evenly between the contending factions, using his escort only as a preponderating weight in critical moments ; and, while taking advantage of every opportunity to assert the authority, and to heighten the prestige of the Government, he must be scrupulously careful to show no trace whether of hostility or favour to either party. Thus the Maamour for the past year never witnessed a dance of the Westerns without being present on the next occasion when the Easterns performed : he and the other Egyptian Officials made their prayer in the mosque of the Senoussi and in that of the Madani on alternate Fridays : if he drank tea on one occasion with Etman Habboun, he would take care to pay a visit before long to Ahmed Hamza. The general appearance of the place and the very friendly demeanour of the people in July last spoke well for the discretion and skill with which he has used his influence. It is eminently a position where men, not measures, are necessary, and it is in this view that special care is now exercised by the Ministry of the Interior in the selection of its representative. Siva is no more a place of banishment for incompetent officials, but a probationary post where successful results will be rewarded with promotion. These are, no doubt, the only means by which so inaccessible a district can be brought, in reality, under the sway of the Egyptian Government.

Assembly of Sheikhs.

The Assembly of Sheikhs is composed at present of thirteen members, one being elected by each family. Vacancies rarely occur except from death : the appointment of the representative then chosen by the family is ratified by the Assembly after it has received the approval of the Maamour.

Judicial Tribunal.

The Judicial tribunal is composed of eight members chosen by the Assembly and approved by the Maamour, who himself acts as President. The presence of the Maamour and five members is sufficient to form a quorum. The jurisdiction of the court is confined to criminal cases. Formerly, the discussion of a case was constantly carried on in the Sivan language, and the president was thus placed at a hopeless disadvantage : protection was necessary to procure any justice for a poor man ; and party warfare often took its rise from an argument in which the Sheikhs of the East sided against those of the West. Thus, in the registers of the court as late as 1895 and 1896, one may see entries such as "Acquitted to avoid disturbances," or "Dismissed to prevent bloodshed."

Farrag Effendi Zeki, the Maamour in 1900, states, however, that the use of Sivan did not cause him any difficulty : it was rarely used, and then, probably, only to explain matters to a Sheikh whose knowledge of Arabic was insufficient.

The following are the names of the Sheikhs who compose the court :—

Osman Habboun	...	...	...	Senoussi	...	...	Western
Ahmed Mansour	...	...	...	"	...	...	"
Mohammed Maaref	...	...	...	"	...	...	Eastern
Wad Ali Abdallah Hadi	...	...	...	Madani	...	...	"
Omar Muslim	...	...	...	"	...	...	"
Madi Basious	...	...	...	Senoussi	...	...	Aghourmi.

Any serious dispute was, and presumably still is, referred to the Senoussi Sheikhs of Jeghbub, whose decision is final. If anyone refuses to abide by their award, he is excommunicated ("terk") by them, and they are boycotted by all the Country. Prompt submission is certain to result.

In this connection, the departure of Sheikh Senoussi from Jeghbub is probably to be regretted : it appears that the Brethren who now reside there, and who are now called upon to arbitrate, are indifferent to motives of principle, and are influenced solely by the desire to escape payment of taxes.

In Siva, as in Egypt, the budget falls into two categories, namely, the revenues which are paid Finances. away as tribute, and those which are applied to local needs. It is proposed to explain the latter first, as they are exclusively raised and controlled by the Assembly of Sheikhs described above.

The revenues of the Sivan Exchequer, or Beit el Mal, are very modest. They are received mostly Local taxation. in kind, and are derived from the sale of manure left on the public squares by the caravans that come to purchase dates : from the sale of coarse grass, called El Aukool, which grows on public grounds after the rains ; and from the sale of public lands. These lands are the empty spaces round the town, with the exception of the Messatih, or squares, in which the date harvest is stored, and which belong, by inheritance, in little plots, to single individuals or families.

The revenues are applied to the following uses :—

- (1.) Repairs to the mosque.
- (2.) Building and repairing the causeways across the Sebakheh.
- (3.) Salaries of the employés who administer these funds, *i.e.*, a representative of the Easterns and another of the Westerns, with one clerk each : they each receive 120 okes of dates and 40 okes of wheat.
- (4.) Salary of Murdhiyeen. These are arbitrators, six in number, three being chosen from the East, and three from the West, to decide disputes as to boundaries. They receive one dollar per annum. Disputes between the people of one party are settled by the Murdhiyeen of that party. Mixed disputes between Easterns and Westerns are rare, as the former only possess one "Hattieh" among the lands of the West, and the latter, similarly, own only the part of one "Hattieh" in the East ; endeavours are being made to effect an exchange of these two properties. Both, however, as well as the people of Aghourmi, have considerable possessions (chiefly date trees) in the district called Zeitoun, at the extreme eastern end of the oasis, six hours distant.
- (5.) Salary of the Rakkab, who arbitrates in questions of shares in a spring. He receives 200 okes of dates and 60 of wheat yearly.
- (6.) Hospitality to strangers, consisting of a present of meat, rice, etc.

In the event of a deficit, a loan is raised, payable in the following year : a surplus is divided among the Sheikhs of families and the members of the Assembly.

Aghourmi has a separate Beit el Mal.

The palm
trees.

Before examining the total revenue of Siva, and the taxation imposed by the Egyptian Government, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the main source of wealth, namely, the groves of palms. The palm plays as important a part in the life of the dwellers in the oasis, as does the reindeer in that of the Samoyedes on the Tundras. Its fruit supplies them with food, and, by exchange, with grain, clothing, tea and all extraneous commodities, while the juice, after fermentation, becomes their wine : its leaves are

woven into mats, dishes, baskets, saddles, boxes and fences for their fields: its wood serves to support their houses: its fibre provides string and rope: its pith is used for food; another liquid is obtained from beneath the fronds, when freshly cut, which is drunk either before or after fermentation, or is kept for vinegar; and treacle is made from the juice of the dates by exposing it first to the rays of the sun and by then boiling it. Finally the camels, donkeys, horses, dogs, in fact all their domestic animals, are fed mainly on dates.

Four principal varieties of palms are cultivated in the oasis. All those which spring from date stones are called El Werry, no matter from what species the date originally came; it is, in fact, the wild palm. The fruit of the Werry ripens on the tree when the various flavours of the different kinds are excellent, but it is practically worthless when dried.

El Faraihi, Es Sa' idi and El Ghazali palms are propagated by cultivating the young shoots which spring up from the foot of the old trees. The dates of the two latter species are allowed to dry on the tree, but El Faraihi dates are gathered when fresh and dried in the sun.

El Werry are fertilized in March and the others in the order in which they are mentioned: their fruit, consequently, ripens in August, September, November and December respectively. The fruit of El Faraihi and El Ghazali are most esteemed, and are eaten only by the rich. The trees are watered about once a month in summer, and they are manured with the Aukool grass, and dung or refuse of any kind. They are not, as a rule, so tall as the palms usually seen in Egypt, but they grow with remarkable luxuriance, five or six stems or even more rising from one root, and the bunches are far larger and more weighted with fruit.

A census of the number of palms has been held several times during the past fifty years; the last took place in 1869 and 1871, and fixed the number at 89,000, but this is, undoubtedly, below the truth. The yield of each tree varies greatly—from 100 okes to 20 or 30—according to the attention bestowed on it, and, of course, there is considerable difference between the crop of a good year, which is known as “El Wady el Khasib,” and a bad year, “El Wady el Afen.”

The latest estimate, made by Mustapha Bey, in 1896, gives 110,000 Saidi, 4,000 Faraihi, 500 Ghazali and 46,000 Werry, as the approximate numbers.

Merchants.

The chief season for the arrival of merchants is the winter—in December and January—though some few come in all the year round, even in the height of summer. The children go to the top of the old burg and watch for the arrival of the first caravans, which they greet with shouts and songs, much as in Egypt it is the custom to greet the first rise of the Nile. Though the Sivans possess a certain number of firearms, obtained mainly through Tripoli and the small ports on the north coast, the Bedouins are, by an old custom, obliged to deposit their weapons in a special house on their arrival. The reason for this is clear: the Bedouins often arrive in such crowds as to outnumber, by two to one, the natives, and in previous times have made several attempts to overpower them, and to carry off their fruit, though, it is said, without success.

Means of exchange.

Money is little used, as it is rare, and dealings are principally effected by barter, whether between natives (in sales of land, for instance) or between natives and strangers. Whatever cash is received from merchants is used for payment of taxes.

Imports.

The chief articles of import are wheat and barley (about 300,000 okes), sheep, lentils, beans, dried camel flesh, tea, sugar and salt fish, besides smaller quantities of butter, matches, wax, cloth, gunpowder, silver ornaments and household utensils.

Caravans.

By far the greater number of caravans belong to the Aulad Ali tribe, and come from Alexandria and the north coast; they export as much as 7,000 camel-loads of dates per annum. 315 loads are purchased by the Er Rabaa, a tribe which travel from Cairo and Ghizeh: these bring supplies of the cloth manufactured at Kerdasa. Donkeys and horses are principally imported from Upper Egypt by way of the oases, by the Gawazy tribe. Finally, large caravans belonging to the Fowakher, Harabi and Barasa tribes arrive, though not regularly, from Tripoli.

Olive trees.

The only other important product of Siva is the olive. The number of olive trees is believed to be about 40,000, each bearing, on an average, a crop of about 40 okes, though, with care, they will produce as much as 100 to 150 okes. They require a better soil than palms, but less attention when once they are well rooted. The berries are gathered in January and February; about half are crushed in local oil

mills, while the other half are dried for sale. The oil is used very extensively for culinary purposes, and also as an ointment for the hair. The remainder is sold to the Bedouins, or is sent to Alexandria.

Mohammed Bey Maher roughly estimates the general income of Siva as follows :—

Wealth of
Siva.

		VALUE.	AMOUNT CONSUMED LOCALLY.
		L.E.	L.E.
Saidy dates	...	7,603	384
Ghazali and Faraihi	...	448	13
Werry	...	2,160	1,440
Olives	...	7,200	3,600
Corn	...	597	597
		<u>L.E.18,008</u>	<u>L.E.6,034</u>

A sum of about L.E.12,000 is thus available for payment of taxes and purchase of imported goods.

The amount payable to the Government as taxes was fixed by Khalil Bey in 1840 at L.E.2,000 per lunar year, the basis for his calculation being a tax of P.T. $2\frac{1}{2}$ on every palm, the number of which, exclusive of the Werry species, he estimated at 80,000. Proposals to alter the amount have always met with opposition—for instance, the intention of the Government to exact the tax by the solar and not the Mohammedan year—by which they pay their dues 34 times in 33 Gregorian years—met with strong opposition, and had to be abandoned.

Government
taxation.

However, in 1873, Sheikh Senoussi was granted exemption from paying taxes amounting to L.E.35 on some of the lands which he possesses in Siva; and in 1897, further reductions were made in accordance with suggestions put forward by Mustapha Bey Maher, as follows :—

The taxes paid by Siva are fixed at L.E.1,750 per annum, including L.E.20 from the oasis of Gara. Sheikh Senoussi and Sheikh Madani Zafer are allowed remissions of L.E.20 and L.E.10

respectively, on the amounts due from them, on the condition that they will continue to exert their influence on the side of the Government for the preservation of order.

Collection of taxes.

The collection of taxes is entrusted to the Sheikhs of families, who are personally responsible for them, and who receive for their work two per cent. of the sum they collect.

Every member of the assembly is paid L.E.2 annually, but if any of these members is at the same time a Sheikh of a family, he receives only the percentage, with a minimum of L.E.2. At the same time, certain fixed periods have been appointed for the payment of taxes.

The method adopted by the Sheikhs for the distribution of taxation is to hold, from time to time, a public examination into the ownership of taxed trees; they enter the changes effected by sale or succession against the entries in the original register made on the occasion of the census in 1871. The revised list is read out to the assembled people, so that complaints may be presented and examined; and the Sheikhs apportion to each family, in accordance with the new register, the share of taxation for which they are liable. Trees planted since 1871 do not appear in the old register, and so escape payment: they are consequently of a higher value. The time would almost seem to have come when it would be desirable to effect a new census. Each family hands the amount for which it is responsible to its Sheikh, and when all have done so, the Sheikhs proceed in a body to the Maamourieh, and deliver the money to the Maamour in exchange for a receipt.

An extremely small sum is also obtained from fines imposed in criminal cases, and from a duty imposed on camels killed for food.

Cost of administration.

The cost of the administration of Siva amounts to about L.E.1,000 per annum. The Maamour is changed yearly, staying one month beyond his year of office to give advice and information to his successor. The other officials are changed once in every two years. They all receive special allowances for service in the oasis.

CHAPTER IV.

SENOUSSI AND MADANI SECTS.

So much has already been written by various authors concerning the Sheikh Senoussi and his sect, that it seems superfluous to give here anything beyond a brief summary of his life and tenets. Those who are anxious to become more closely acquainted with the subject cannot do better than study the monograph by Duveyrier "La confrérie musulmane de Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali Es Senoussi," published at Paris by the Société de Géographie, 184 Boulevard St. Germain. Le Chatelier's "Confréries Musulmanes du Hedjaz," also contains interesting details.

The family of the Senoussi trace their descent back to Hassan, the son of Ali, the cousin-german of Mohamed. Mohamed Ibn Ali Es Senoussi, father of the present Sheikh, was born about 1826 at Mostaganem in Algeria. He was educated at Fas, in the principles of the Dirkawi sect. On the occasion of a pilgrimage to Mecca, he became acquainted with the celebrated Ahmed Ibn Idris El Sherif El Fasi, by whom he was initiated into the Shazlieh Tarika, of which he subsequently, through his piety and learning, became the head, receiving authority to teach its "zikr" or particular formula of prayer. He established a Zowia—that is, practically, a monastery—in Mecca. He then travelled to Tripoli and settled at Jebel el Akhder, where two sons were born to him, in 1261 and 1263 A.H. (1843 and 1845), named respectively, Es Sayed Mohamed El Mahdi Es Senoussi and Es Sayed Mohamed Sherif.

In the latter year he returned to the Zowia he had founded at Mecca, and he there passed seven years in teaching the holy law and traditions, while his influence grew continually wider, and people flocked more and more to hear him.

A remarkable letter was addressed at this time by Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Idris to the well-known Sheikh El Morgani, at Kassala, another of his pupils, and head of the Morgani Tarika, with its numerous followers, in which he dwells on the high degree of knowledge and virtue attained by the Maghrib brethren who were with him; he says that, by inspiration, they are enabled by God to arrive at the truth without any intermediary, and that the men who had hitherto appeared distinguished, now endeavoured to be like them. It is believed that Sheikh Senoussi is the person specially referred to in these words.

His exhortation to Sheikh El Morgani runs as follows:—

“ Be industrious and diligent; abandon rest and sleep, and serve God in all truth and “ sincerity; let your great energy in him be your best food. Beware even of yourself. Beware “ that you be not deceived by the flattery and adulation of your followers, for these “ men are trials and snares to you, and their gathering round you is as a deadly poison. “ Put no trust in them, but avoid ambition, and approach your Lord humbly with all your “ heart. For ambition in a man is as a sword which cuts him off from the true Lord. “ Increase your zeal in God so that your brethren may imitate you. Avoid sloth and “ idleness, lest your brethren follow you and perish.”

This letter is learnt by heart and widely disseminated in the Soudan.

Senoussi fled from Mecca on the occasion of a rising under the Grand Sherif against the Turkish authorities, in which he was accused of complicity. He came to Egypt and was hospitably received by the Khedive Abbas, who built him a Zowia at Sheikh Golali, in the Bab el Hadid quarter of Cairo, but he preferred to stay at Kerdasa, where numbers of people resorted to him. After a short while, he continued his journey to Tripoli, passing through Siva on the way. During the time he spent there, he founded the Zowia at Zeitoun, and another in the western part of the town, and his doctrines took firm root. He next settled for two years at Jebel el Akhder, and, at the end of this period, being anxious to avoid contact with the Turkish Government, and to enjoy complete independence, he removed to the oasis of Jeghbub, some three days' journey west of Siva, where he remained till his death, in 1858. His tomb

is in the mosque of Hassan el Banna, at Jeghbub, and has become a centre for pilgrimage. The town of Jeghbub is described as well built, surrounded by a wall ; there are many gardens with fruit trees, but the water is brackish ; cisterns have been built for storing rain water. There is a valuable library and a school, where at one time as many as 500 students received instruction.

The Sheikh's life was spent in giving an example of strict observance of religious duties, together with continuous meditation on doctrine ; he studied to imitate the Prophet in his words, and even in his dress ; he inculcated extreme simplicity of life and manners ; he showed generosity to the poor and to pilgrims, and benevolence to inferiors ; and he trained himself to bear good and evil fortune with an equal mind.

The high prestige of the father descended with increased lustre on the son, owing mainly to the respect with which his father treated the latter. It is related that his father would wait on him or bring him his shoes, and on being asked why he did so, he would reply that he was anxious to obtain the approval of his son, and so merit his intercession at the last day.

It resulted that the influence and following of Es Sayed Mohamed el Mahdi Es Senoussi increased very rapidly over all Northern Africa. The Arabs call him Sidi El Mahdi, and swear by his name, and, despite his injunctions to the contrary, they persist in believing that he is the true Mahdi who is to conquer the world and to herald the millennium.

The number of his Zowias is variously estimated, but there would appear to be at least 300. They ^{Zowia} are supported by the produce of their farms and by their wealth in flocks and herds. All surplus is sent to the Sheikh, who receives, besides, many rich presents from his followers. Each Zowia contains accommodation for Senoussi travellers, and is presided over by a Sheikh whose duties include the decision of disputes among the neighbouring Bedouins. The Zowias on the coast between Alexandria and Derna are El Akkari, Sambis, Kerewi, Foka, Ba Meraddaha, Om Rahm, En Negileh, Esbeikh, El Hafra, El Gharyani, El Merassas, El Azziyat and Mastuba.

The Sheikhs are said to be well informed within the limits of the old Arab spheres of knowledge. They appear to have no animosity against Christian travellers, though they will not allow them to enter the Zowias.

Sheikh
Mohamed
Mahdi
Senoussi

Their aim is to have as little intercourse with European people and European ideas as possible, for they see that wherever the West and the East meet, it is always the former which gains the upper hand

It will be remembered that the Soudanese Mahdi proposed to Sheikh Senoussi to become his third Khalifa, an offer which was scornfully rejected.

The Sheikh will have no communication with those who do not belong to his Tarika, except that he will send official replies to official letters addressed to him by high authorities.

All members of the Tarika are called Brethren.

Principles.

Duveyrier's words, written in 1864, still hold good as regards the Senoussi confraternity :—“ La pensée fondamentale de cette association est une triple protestation ; contre les concessions faites à la civilisation “de l'Occident ; contre les innovations, conséquences du progrès, introduites dans les divers états de l'orient “par les derniers souverains ; enfin contre de nouvelles tentatives d'extension d'influence dans les pays encore “préservés par la grâce divine.”

Senoussi refuses to acknowledge the claim of the Sultan to the Khalifat, on which account he is considered by Turks and orthodox Mussulmans as a Khariji, or one who is outside the pale of true believers. His aim is to revert to the state of primitive uncontaminated Islam—but to do so by the way of peace.

Prayers.

The zikr, or formula of prayer, used by the Senoussi Tarika, is as follows :—

“ I ask pardon of God.” (Repeated 100 times).

“ There is no God but God : Mohamed is the Prophet of God, in every glance and breath, “to the number of all things within the knowledge of God.” (Repeated 300 times).

“ Oh God, pour Thy blessings on our Lord Mohamed the Prophet, who could neither read “nor write, and bless his family and friends, and may peace be upon them.” (Repeated 100 times).

This is the short prayer : there are two others called the intermediate and the long prayers. In the latter certain phrases have to be repeated several thousand times.

It is said to be the practice of this sect not to read the Koran, but to recite it by heart.

Six years ago, Sheikh Senoussi left Jeghbub and established himself in the Kufrah oasis, twenty days' journey to the south, where he was joined two years later by his family: more recently he has moved to Karu between Kufra and Ab Bashr, the capital of Wadai.

The Madani Tarika is far less influential and widespread than that of the Senoussi. It is said to ^{Madan} be the successor of the Wahhabi confraternity, but it is directly connected with the Dirkawi sect which was founded by Sheikh El Arabi ed Derkawi. On the death of the founder, Sheikh Mohamed Ben Hamza Zafer el Madani, born at Medina of the Zawafer tribe, succeeded to the leadership, and gave his name to the sect. About 80 years ago he took up his residence in Tripoli and propagated his doctrines. He visited Siva, and his tenets were thus established there considerably before the arrival of the Senoussi. He was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Mohamed Zafer, who is now 72 years of age. Previously, Sheikh Mohamed used frequently to visit Siva, but he has not now been there for almost 30 years. He lives at Constantinople, but has a "wekeel" at Siva, and his brother represents him at Benghazi. His doctrines obtain chiefly in Tripoli and Tunis: in Egypt he has three Zowias—El Tarfana, Barbata, and Mariout.

The followers of his sect are called El Foukara, "the poor," as poverty and self-humiliation, even the begging of alms, are among the most important of his principles.

The following is the Madani zikr:—

Prayer

"I ask pardon of God." (Repeated 100 times.)

"Oh God, pour Thy blessing upon our Lord Mohamed, Thy slave, Thy prophet and Thy apostle, the prophet who could neither read nor write, and on his family and friends, and may peace be upon them." (Repeated 100 times.)

"There is no God but God." (Repeated 100 times, at the conclusion of which—)
"Mohamed is the Prophet of God."

It will be noticed that the Senoussi and the Madani sects are closely related through that of the Dirkawi: their very affinity seems to have increased their mutual hostility.

CHAPTER V.

ROADS TO THE SIVAN OASIS.

El Akaba road.

The most important road from Egypt to Siva is that called El Akaba, the name given to the pilgrims' road, which, running the entire length of the Mediterranean coast, is still used by the Maghrabi pilgrims—from Morocco, Algiers, etc.; there is a “darb” or desert road leading direct to Cairo, leaving the sea near Bir Shamam, some 30 miles west of Abusir.

There is no lack of good water and grazing for camels along this road, but, to reach Siva, it is necessary to strike south-west, across the barren and waterless desert, from a point near Ras el Khanais. This part of the journey takes about eight days. It is very difficult to trace the routes followed by various travellers, as no maps of the desert exist, and errors in names, through faulty transcription and mis-hearing, abound. Mustapha Bey Maher left the sea at Foka,*† and passed by Bir Boota,‡ Bir Khalda,[†] Ed Daffa,^{||} and Gara.[§]

Robecchi-Bricchetti went south from Ras el Khanais, passing Bir Abu Battah (? Bir Boota), Bir Hairam,^{||} and Gara. This journey takes about twenty days.

Mogara road.

The second well-known road starts from Alexandria in a south-south-west direction, via Meaza[†] to Mogara^{††} which may be reached equally from Wady Natroun or any place in the Riff, such as Damanhour or the Pyramids. The traveller then follows the great Libyan depression westwards, past Bir Labbak,[§] Abu Murzuk,[§] Bir el Hega,[§] Bir Abd en Nebi,[§] and Gara; a variation of this route was adopted by

* Well. † Sweet water. ‡ Reservoir. || Dry. § Brackish water.

¹ Weld Blundell and St. John state that Bir Khalda is a spring and not a reservoir.

Mohammed Ali's troops on their first expedition, proceeding more west from Alexandria past the wells of El Hamam† and El Gemimat,† rejoining the other road at Abu Murzuk. Grazing for camels is found in sufficient quantities, and there is a fair supply of water, though of indifferent quality. The distance is about fourteen or fifteen days. The Bedouins prefer to go by El Akaba.

The routes shown on the annexed map bring Siva within seven days of Cairo to one who goes by sea from Alexandria to either Mersa Matrouh or Solloum. Siva is about five days distant with fast travelling from both these ports. Matrouh can only be entered in fair weather, but a landing may always be effected at Ras Alem Room, a spot about seven miles to the east. A ship can touch at Solloum in almost any weather.

The Oasis road is little used—never, in fact, except in winter. It may be traversed in ten days, but Oasis road. water is scarce, and the going is heavy through deep sand and shifting dunes. The wells are set down as Kasr el Buaty,† Satra,§ El Aarag,§ and El Rantoon.† It was used by Cailliaud in 1819 and by Mohammed Ali's second expedition. Belzoni attempted it, but was obliged to return.

† Sweet Water.

§ Brackish Water.

APPENDIX A.

THE ORACLE OF JUPITER AMMON.

Nous ne savons pas exactement à quelle époque l'Oasis d'Ammon tomba sous l'influence égyptienne. Les peuples qui habitaient le désert dans la direction de l'Ouest, Timahou et Labou, et qui étaient d'origine et de langue berbère, durent y avoir des établissements d'assez bonne heure, mais la puissance de l'Egypte ne s'y fit sentir, au moins d'une manière efficace, qu'à partir des débuts de la seconde époque thébaine, vers le milieu de la XVIII^e dynastie (XVI^e siècle av. J.C.) Elle reçut certainement à cette époque une garnison égyptienne, et son dieu indigène s'identifia avec l'Ammon de Thèbes: celui-ci y importa sa famille, la déesse-mère Maout et le dieu-fils Khonsou, puis toute la théologie thébaine avec sa neuvaine et sa huitaine de divinités cosmogoniques, telles qu'on les rencontre à Louxor et à Karnak. Il est probable que le temple premier de l'Oasis fut bâti vers ce temps, mais celui dont nous connaissons les restes aujourd'hui n'est pas antérieur au VI^e siècle avant notre ère, et c'est à cette époque à peu-près que remontent les plus anciens renseignements authentiques que nous possédons sur l'histoire et sur la constitution de l'Oasis.

Le nom égyptien en était *Sakhit Amouou*, le Champ des Palmes, et de fait les auteurs classiques parlent avec admiration de sa richesse en palmiers⁽¹⁾. Sa source intermittente et à température variable, alternativement chaude et froide, la Source célèbre du Soleil⁽²⁾, attira de bonne heure l'attention des populations voisines, et lui valut sans doute d'être considéré par elles comme un endroit où la présence des dieux se manifestait plus sensible: un oracle d'Ammon y fut institué dès le temps de la fondation du temple, dont la renommée s'étendit jusqu'aux Grecs, lorsqu'ils eurent mis le pied sur la terre d'Afrique, au milieu du VII^e siècle, et fondé Cyrène. Le peuple des Ammoniens était alors gouverné par des princes indigènes, qui

(¹) Théophraste, *Histoire des plantes*, IV, 3; Pline, *Hist. Nat.*, XIII, III.

(²) Hérodote IV, clxxxi; Diodore de Sicile, XVII, 50; Arrien, *Anabase*, III, iv; Quinte-Curce, IV, vii § 31; Pline, *Hist. Nat.*, II, 228 et V, 31, etc.

tantôt étaient complètement indépendants, tantôt reconnaissaient d'une façon plus ou moins platonique la suzeraineté de Pharaon (¹). C'était le chef de la communauté, à côté de qui le grand-prêtre du temple exerçait une autorité considérable, si même il ne réunissait pas souvent entre ses mains les pouvoirs politique et religieux (²). Le dieu avait la forme humaine avec la tête de bétier (³), comme la plupart des formes d'Ammon qu'on rencontre dans les colonies thébaines, mais les Doriens de Cyrène, en l'identifiant avec leur Zeus, sous le nom hybride de Zeus-Ammôn, ne purent pas se résigner à lui conserver sa face bestiale : ils lui prêtèrent le type de leur Zeus, mais en lui ajoutant, à la place de l'oreille, la corne recourbée en hélice du bétier primitif. C'est ainsi qu'on l'aperçoit le plus souvent sur les monnaies archaïques de Cyrène et des villes cyréennes, Barca, Evhespérides, et il y échange parfois avec une tête imberbe munie de la corne, qui représente l'Osiris Ammonien, identifié avec Dionysos (⁴). La manière dont Ammon rendait ses oracles était celle-là-même que nous connaissons à Thèbes, par les documents de la XX^e et de la XXI^e Dynasties. L'emblème prophétique du dieu orné d'émeraudes et de pierres précieuses (⁵), reposait sous le naos d'une barque sacrée, que l'on gardait à l'ordinaire enfermée dans la celle du temple. Lorsqu'un personnage de marque se présentait pour la consulter, une escouade de prêtres enlevait la barque sur ses épaules et la transportait du sanctuaire à l'entrée du pronaos : une escorte de femmes consacrées au culte l'accompagnait processionnellement en chantant des hymnes. Comme son prototype Thébain, il répondait aux questions qu'on lui posait par des gestes de la main ou par des signes de la tête (⁶). Il laissait tomber la tête par deux fois pour donner son acquiescement aux prières qu'on lui adressait (⁷), mais il ne révélait sa volonté ni par des songes, ni par des paroles (⁸), comme d'autres formes de

(¹) Hérodote, II, xxxii, nomme l'un de ces personnages Etéarchos et lui donne le titre de roi ; un autre est mentionné dans une inscription hiéroglyphique copié en 1900 par Steindorff, pendant son séjour à l'Oasis.

(²) Le grand-prêtre est mentionné, par exemple, dans le récit de la consultation de l'oracle par Alexandre (Strabon, XVII, I § 43, Diodore de Sicile, XVII, 50 sqq., Quinte Curce IV, vii § 23 sqq.).

(³) Hérodote, II, clxxxi, où se trouve l'explication que les Grecs donnaient de l'origine de cette forme : les bas-reliefs copiés par Jomard et Minutoli dans les ruines montrent en effet un Ammon criocéphale.

(⁴) L. Muller, *Numismatique de l'ancienne Afrique*, I, p. 101 sqq., a reconnu dans ce personnage un Bacchus Libyen, fils d'Ammon et de Rhéa (Diodore de Sicile, III, 66-74) dont la mythographe Denys de Mitylène racontait les exploits fabuleux.

(⁵) Quinte-Curce (IV, vii, § 23) la décrit, probablement d'après Aristobule comme étant *umbilico maxime similis*, sans que l'on distingue bien nettement à quelle forme plastique répond le terme *umbilicus*.

(⁶) Servius, *Commentaire à l'Enéide*, VI, 68.

(⁷) Pour les statues machinées des temples Egyptiens, cfr. Maspero, *Mélanges de Mythologie et d'Archéologie Egyptiennes*, t. I. p.

(⁸) Strabon, XVII, I § 43.

l'Ammon Thébain le faisaient volontiers : les prêtres interprétaient ses gestes, et ils en rendaient la signification par des discours, qui étaient parfois en vers à l'époque hellénistique⁽¹⁾.

L'oracle, fréquenté par les Cyrénéens, fut promptement connu en Grèce par leur intermédiaire, et conquit une grande influence parmi les cités doriques : il semble avoir pris parti pour les Grecs de Libye, dans les luttes qu'ils soutinrent au VI^e siècle contre les Pharaons de la XXVI^e Dynastie, et il mit en circulation, sur les faits principaux de l'histoire contemporaine, une série de légendes différentes, par le détail et par l'esprit, de celles qui se développèrent autour de l'oracle de Buto, sous l'influence des Ioniens de Naucratis⁽²⁾. On essaya de le rattacher par l'origin au Zeus de Dodone, qui, lui aussi, avait grand renom de prophète, et l'on raconta à Hérodote, comment deux prêtresses thébaines, enlevées par les Phéniciens, avaient été vendues l'une en Epire, l'autre en Libye, et avaient établi chacune un oracle dans leurs pays d'adoption⁽³⁾. Une autre tradition attribua la fondation à Dionysos ; pendant ses expéditions fantastiques, comme son armée, égarée dans le désert, était menacée d'y mourir de soif, il aurait bâti le temple dans un endroit où un bétail, apparu soudain, lui aurait signalé l'existence d'une source abondante, et c'est en reconnaissance du service rendu qu'il aurait adopté en guise d'insignes les cornes du bétail⁽⁴⁾. Quoi qu'il en soit, vers le milieu du VI^e siècle, Ammon de Libye jouissait déjà d'une réputation universelle. Crésus le Lydien l'avait consulté et n'avait obtenu de lui qu'une réponse inexacte⁽⁵⁾, mais cette mésaventure n'avait diminué en rien l'estime qu'on avait pour lui. Cambuse essaya de mettre la main sur lui et sur ses trésors : l'expédition qu'il lui dépêcha disparut dans le désert, et personne ne revint dire le sort qu'elle avait subi⁽⁶⁾. Il semble bien que les pélerinages des dévots avaient attiré le commerce dans l'Oasis, et que les caravans du Soudan venaient s'y rencontrer avec les marchands de la Grèce⁽⁷⁾. Le dieu y gagna en renom comme en richesse, si bien qu'au milieu de

⁽¹⁾ Pseudo-Callisthènes, *dé Müller-Didot*, p. 31, 36 ; cfr. Silius Italicus, III, 700 sqq.

⁽²⁾ Hérodote a puisé ses renseignements sur cette époque de préférence à Naucratis et à Sais, soit dans la tradition de Buto ; on trouve les restes de la tradition ammonienne, un peu dans Hérodote, beaucoup dans les fragments d'historiens aujourd'hui perdus, tels qu'Aristagoras de Milet.

⁽³⁾ Hérodote, II, LIV-LVIII, où la légende est développée et discutée tout au long.

⁽⁴⁾ Cette légende ne nous est connue que par des scholiastes de basse époque ; Servius, *Commentaire à l'Enéide*, IV, 196. Scholiaste de Lucain, Pharsale IV, 672, etc.

⁽⁵⁾ Hérodote, I, xlvi.

⁽⁶⁾ Hérodote, III, xvii, xxv-xxvi.

⁽⁷⁾ C'est bien ce qui semble résulter du curieux récit qu'Hérodote recueillit auprès de Cyrénéens sur Etéarque, roi des Ammoniens et sur l'itinéraire de ses messagers vers ce qu'il crut être les sources du Nil, mais qui dut être le Niger (II, XXXII).

V^e siècle le poète Pindare lui consacrait une de ses hymnes, dont la copie manuscrite se voyait encore, cinq ou six cents ans plus tard, dans le temple, sur un autel⁽¹⁾: on connaît même qu'il lui avait élevé, à Thèbes de Béotie, une statue exécutée par le sculpteur Calamis. Nous ne connaissons que peu de l'histoire de l'oracle à cette époque. Nous savons qu'il avait prédit avec une exactitude minutieuse la mort de Cimon⁽²⁾, et que Sparte, comme Athènes⁽³⁾, lui demandait conseil: Lysandre lui bâtit un temple en Thrace, près d'Aphyté, et essaya indiscrètement d'acheter son appui pour ses projets ambitieux⁽⁴⁾. Au milieu du troisième siècle sa réputation s'était accrue encore⁽⁵⁾; lorsqu'Alexandre voulut être divinisé, c'est à lui qu'il s'adressa, comme au plus compétent et aussi comme au plus mystérieux de tous les oracles. Il alla lui-même poser la question à Zeus, et ce voyage vers l'Oasis à travers le désert ne fut pas considéré comme l'un de ses moindres exploits: on sait quels dangers il courut et qu'il en revint fils authentique du dieu⁽⁶⁾. Quelques années plus tard, il lui demanda d'élever au rang des héros son ami Héphestion, qui venait de mourir. La primauté du dieu en ces matières fut si bien établie par là, qu'il acquit comme le privilège de décerner des brevets de dieux aux souverains contemporains; on voit, en 304, les Rhodiens réclamer de lui l'autorisation de rendre un culte au roi Ptolémée⁽⁷⁾. Il ne se tint pas longtemps à ce haut degré d'influence, et il déclina pendant le III^e siècle; toutefois sa chute ne se précipita qu'à partir du II^e siècle, dans le temps où Rome étendit progressivement sa domination sur tout l'Orient.

Les Romains en effet, habitués aux rites de la divination étrusque, négligèrent tous les oracles orientaux et surtout celui d'Amon: déjà, sous Auguste, le géographe Strabon constatait que le sanctuaire de l'Oasis était presque entièrement délaissé.⁽⁸⁾

⁽¹⁾ Pausanias, IX, vii § 1; cfr. Pindare, Fragment 36, ed. Bergk.

⁽²⁾ Plutarque, Cimon, § 18.

⁽³⁾ Aristophane, les Oiseaux, 619, 716; Plutarque, Nicias, § 13; Platon, les Lois, V, p. 738 C, etc.

⁽⁴⁾ Plutarque, Lysandre, § 20, d'après Ephore (Fragment 127, dans Müller-Didot, *Fragmenta Historicorum Græcorum*, t. IV).

⁽⁵⁾ Un compte athénien de l'an 333 a.v. J. C. (*Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*, II, 741) mentionne des sacrifices offerts par les stratèges au dieu Ammon, pour le compte de la république.

⁽⁶⁾ Cfr. sur cette expédition Strabon et Arrien, *Anabase*, VII, xiv § 23, qui paraît avoir puisé ses renseignements surtout aux mémoires de Ptolémée, fils de Lagos. Pour l'interprétation des particularités que les écrivains anciens nous ont transmises à ce propos, cf. Maspero, *Comment Ammon devint Dieu en Egypte*, 1895.

Plutarque, Alexandre, § 72, *de Alexandri fort.* II, 11.

⁽⁷⁾ Diodore de Sicile XX, 100; on peut se demander si les monnaies où le roi de Syrie Seleucus Nicator s'est fait représenter décoré comme Alexandre des cornes de bœuf, ne supposent pas une consultation de l'oracle suivie de divinisations.

⁽⁸⁾ Strabon, XVII, I § 43, p. 813: τὸ ἐν Ἀμμωνι σχεδόν τι ἐκλέπται χρηστήριον.

La personne et le culte du dieu ne s'acclimatèrent jamais dans le monde occidental : la ressemblance des noms le fit identifier au Baal-Khaman des Carthaginoises,⁽¹⁾ et lui assura une sorte de notoriété dans la province d'Afrique, mais il ne gagna nulle part la popularité d'Isis, d'Osiris, d'Anubis, même de Khnoumis. Les mentions que les écrivains latins font de lui ne sont guère que des souvenirs de leurs lectures, et quand Juvénal, au commencement du II^e siècle, parle encore des questions difficiles qu'on lui posait, et qu'il résolvait là où la Pythie avait échoué,⁽²⁾ on ne peut voir dans son langage qu'une de ces exagérations familières aux poètes : une cinquantaine d'années plus tard, il était entièrement muet.⁽³⁾ Ce n'est plus que figure de rhétorique et réminiscence littéraire si Cladien et Ausone nous parlent encore de lui.⁽⁴⁾ Sa religion était morte au IV^e siècle : le christianisme l'a remplacée et l'Oasis, au lieu d'être un rendez-vous de pèlerins, n'était plus qu'un lieu de déportation pour les criminels ou pour les hauts personnages en disgrâce. On ne sait rien de son histoire sous la domination byzantine. Elle dut souffrir, comme la Cyrénaique et la Marmarique, des incursions des tribus berbères du désert, et elle fut conquise par les Musulmans, en même temps qu'elles, entre le milieu et la fin du VII^e siècle après notre ère.

G. MASPERO.

(¹) C'est à cette confusion des deux dieux qu'on doit l'orthographe Hammon avec un "h" initial, *l'Hammone satus* de Virgile, *Enéide*, IV, 198, et le *Juppiter Hammon* du *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VII, 9018.

(²) Juvénal, VI, 554.

(³) Pausanias.

(⁴) Cladien, *de IV Honorii consulatu*, 144 ; Ausone, *Epigramme* 93.

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